

FRIDAY 11 APRIL

FIRST NATIONAL FORCED MARRIAGE HELPLINE LAUNCHED

A new national helpline for victims of forced marriage and honour-based violence, part-funded by the Forced Marriage Unit, was launched today by Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker.

The 'Honour Network', run by the charity Karma Nirvana is a dedicated forced marriage and honour-based violence helpline, staffed by survivors offering emotional and practical support.

Home Office Minister Vernon Coaker said:

“This helpline run by survivors, for survivors, is a big step in the fight to raise awareness of the issues of forced marriage and honour-based violence and is crucial in giving victims across the country the confidence to come forward.

We recognise that the scale of these issues remains unknown and much of the problem stays underground. We are determined across Government to continue engaging with local communities and taking action to protect victims to put an end to this appalling practice.”

Jasvinder Sanghera, founder of Karma Nirvana said:

“The Honour Network is about reclaiming the word honour. It’s designed for victims, survivors or potential victims of honour based crimes to reassure them they are victims not perpetrators.

The Network is designed to identify survivors to help support each other. The helpline will be manned by survivors themselves helping people take a stand against these crimes.”

Commander Steve Allen, ACPO lead on Honour Crime said:

“Police forces, together with partners, agencies and local communities have been working to tackle this area of violent crime. We welcome and support the launch of the National Forced Marriage helpline as a way of providing support and practical help to people experiencing honour-based violence.

“The helpline is an important step towards supporting victims and we are encouraged to see the wide-ranging commitment by agencies to tackle this complex crime area.”

The joint Foreign and Commonwealth/Home Office Forced Marriage Unit was set up in 2005 and handles 5000 enquiries and up to 400 cases per year.

The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act will be implemented in the autumn. Courts will be able to make orders to prevent forced marriages and protect victims. Guidelines produced by the Forced Marriage Unit in co-operation with other Government departments, for groups working with forced marriage victims, including the police, social services, health and education professionals will be placed on a statutory footing.

Notes for Editors

1. The launch will take place on Friday 11th April 2008 10am – 3pm at Kings Hall, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 1RN.
2. Karma Nirvana (registered charity no. 1089477) is an Asian men and women's project based in Derby. The majority of its team are survivors of forced marriages or honour based violence. They receive over 200 calls a month for support and deal with around 15 new cases a week.
3. The launch, in conjunction with the Iranian & Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation and Mo Chaudry, will include speakers from Karma Nirvana, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).
4. The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act will be implemented this autumn. The Act will provide the courts with powers to make Forced Marriage Protection Orders to stop someone from forcing another person into marriage. Where a forced marriage has taken place, the courts would also be able to make orders to protect the victim and help remove them from that situation.
5. Details of the joint Foreign and Commonwealth Office/Home Office Forced Marriage Unit can be found at www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage
6. All proceeds from this event go towards the continuation of the helpline.